UNCONSCIOUS MOTIVES UNDERLYING THE PERSONALITIES OF GREAT STATESMEN AND THEIR RELATION TO EPOCH-MAKING EVENTS
(I. A PSYCHOLOGIC STUDY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN)

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ORIGINAL ARTICLES

UNCONSCIOUS MOTIVES UNDERLYING THE PERSONALITIES OF GREAT STATESMEN AND THEIR RELATION TO EPOCH-MAKING EVENTS (I. A PSYCHOLOGIC STUDY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN)[1]

By L. Pierce Clark, M.D.

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While no one would have the temerity in the present status of the development of historical science to revive the rather discredited theory of Carlyle that history is but the collective biography of a few conspicuous public figures, it cannot be denied that there is often a residuary influence to be detected in the course of events which must be assigned to the part played by the dominating personalities of the time. The present article will be concerned with suggestions regarding a more intensive and scientific study of the latter.

Critical periods in national life are often imperfectly understood because current events only are considered in their interpretation. Intensive study of the personalities of great statesmen of any epoch has but recently become an object of psychological research. When the events in the political and social order are properly coordinated with the conscious and unconscious personal motives and desires of its contemporary leaders, we may then expect a sounder and broader view of historic interpretation. At the culmination of a crisis in national life we find there have often been comparatively few issues that have shaped a final national outcome, and that two or three

[1] Read before N. Y. Psychiatrical Society, March 5, 1919.

powerful leaders have forged the ideas and sentiments of the people *en masse* and forced the crisis to a decision. We thus find it said that "the time was not yet ripe," or that "events waited upon a leader sufficiently powerful," etc. Too much reliance, therefore, would seem to have been placed upon current issues and events to explain epochal history, and not enough upon the innate attitudes of certain great contemporaries. These, largely because of their fundamental reactions to certain deeper unconscious personal motives which control human behavior, seize upon the more or less obvious issues of their time and devote themselves to a particular cause with an assiduity altogether out of proportion to any casual reason. Instances bearing out such a contention might be multiplied indefinitely.

True historical interpretation, therefore, of any great epochal moment is not possible until we make a careful psychological study of the people of that particular period, especially its great men and leaders. The position in the main is not a new one, but heretofore historians have made a study of the more obvious characterology of the great statesmen and either have not been able, or were unwilling, to study such historic personages in the more scientific manner now possible, although this has already been done in several instances by those trained in methods of intensive mental analysis. The historian, therefore, has not fully exhausted the possibilities of his subject, because of inadequate psychological training, while the psychologist for the most part has not coupled up his accurate personal analyses with the events to which his characterological study forms a necessary part. Those interested in the two methods of approach in historic study should coöperate more than has been done in the past. This viewpoint is worthy of a more extended investigation than this brief outline will permit. When we shall have made a broader, more intensive analysis of men and events we can possibly comprehend why the souls of certain great leaders seem literally to have caught fire, and they have exhibited an almost superhuman energy in their lifelong devotion to a particular cause.

One may properly inquire, what are some of these deeper motives in the individual which serve the purpose of advancing social consciousness in a practical manner? Modern psychology has unearthed a host of primitive and infantile motives which, though they seem to disappear from the individuals' lives as they grow up, are really found not to have been lost, but are transformed and become operative to the more adult purposes of existence. Simple illustrations are found in creative genuises whose preoccupation in

childhood early portended a fruition in later life. The boy Stephenson made toy engines, while Newton in his early youth was observant of natural phenomena. But such obvious data are still more deeply analyzable, and to these primary and more genetic instincts modern psychology has already devoted much time and fascinating research. To make such intimate studies immediately serviceable in historic, literary and artistic interpretation, a group of investigators have collected data and published their studies in a journal devoted exclusively to this domain. From a historic point of view it would seem desirable to select the prominent leaders of an epoch and proceed to analyze their characters as to salient personality traits and life reactions, and then examine the previous succession of events in their childhood which may have led up to the main traits of the adult character. In order to confine the issue at this time to a concrete instance, I have undertaken a tentative study of the depressive personality of Abraham Lincoln and the possible developmental causes that might account for such a personality, and have briefly sketched the influence which such character-traits may have had upon the events and issues of his time.

That Lincoln suffered lifelong from periodic depression—indeed, that he never seemed entirely free from some vestiges of the more intense episodes, is well known to all, but an attempt to elucidate the deeper, more genetic causes for such states has not heretofore been undertaken. The difficulties of such a study are in more than one direction; first, in mental medicine we have only too recently formulated a tentative explanation of how retarded or periodic depressions occur. This formulation is still under investigation, as sufficient data upon many points are still lacking. Naturally in our present thesis such studies have to be made upon historic data which, while recorded accurately, were collected for quite other purposes than an innate delineation of the mental traits which might be considered essential for the precise purpose of making a clinical diagnosis. Often, too, as in the case of Lincoln, there is a natural and sublime reserve which great personages draw about their more intimate life. As has been said, the great often lead solitary lives and defy analysis in more ways than one. There seems to be little doubt, however, that if we could have employed the modern methods of mental analysis to the heroic life of Lincoln, almost profane as such a scientific inquiry would now seem to be, we might have acquired sufficient facts to have completely substantiated our present thesis. We are obliged, however, to rest the main tenets of

our conclusions upon reliable historic documents. We shall develop the study by first giving a simple statement of the nature and cause of periodic, or retarded, depressions as psychiatry has come to know them through long experience. Next, we shall state the psychologic mechanisms or unconscious motives seemingly underlying the lives of individuals thus afflicted, and finally we shall examine such portions of Lincoln's life as have a bearing upon this view of the cause of his depressions.

It is well known that many individuals otherwise normal are subject to more or less marked fluctuations in mood, and these swings of emotional feeling may occur irregularly or periodically. Heredity is the most common causative factor in the induction of the temperament and personality from which such disorders are recruited. At least some marked occurrence of such hereditary traits is found in the family stock of nearly three fourths of these patients (Kraepelin). Often the relatives have suffered from outspoken forms of the same mental disorder, or there is present a constitutional bias to some degree of retarded depression.

Individuals who suffer from periodic depressions possess evidence of a peculiar type of personality previous to the onset of the psychosis.[2] Some show an open, expansive temperament, while others, predisposed to more marked depression, are of a depressive makeup. In the majority frequent and causeless changes of mood are in evidence; they are excitable, excessively shy, or reserved. The disorder usually appears independent of external causes, either physical or mental. Even when such alleged causes are present, the provoking factors are usually inadequate to account fully for the depressed state. The condition is often recurrent, being based upon a deep-seated constitutional mental makeup. It is essentially a benign affliction, and recovery from individual attacks are the rule. The first attack usually occurs in the first or second decade of adult life. The real nature of the underlying morbid process in the brain, if any exists, is most obscure. Several hypotheses have been formulated to account for the psychosis, but none have proven adequate. There are no constant demonstrable or structural changes in the nervous

[2] As has been pointed out by Hoch and others, the fundamental type of makeup of the manic depressive psychotic is frequently found to be one of either an open type of personality, or one of general moodiness. It is held, however, that there are so many contributing physical and mental factors in the induction of this mental disorder that one must not rely unduly upon the type of personality otherwise than to indicate the main trends of mental reactions which may follow in such personalities.

system which may be counted as characteristic of this condition. In the absence of structural changes in the brain, psychiatrists have lately turned their attention more specifically to the psychologic factors playing a rôle in the evolution of the disorder. These will be considered later.

For the sake of those unacquainted with the condition we may now hastily sketch the usual picture of the mental state. The onset of depression is generally gradual unless it follows acute illness or definite mental shock. First there appears a mental sluggishness; thought becomes slow and difficult. Decisions are poorly made. The patient has difficulty in forming sentences and in finding words with which to express his thoughts. It is hard for him to follow ideas either in reading or in ordinary conversation. The process of association of ideas is remarkably retarded. The patient does not talk because he has nothing to say. There is a dearth of ideas and a poverty of thought. Familiar facts are no longer at their command. Remembrance of most commonplace events is difficult. In spite of the great slowness of apprehension and thought, consciousness and knowledge of surroundings are well retained. The patient appears dull and sluggish and may explain that he really feels tired out. His usual daily activities are performed slowly, as though under a feeling of inward restraint. If he is sent out to walk or to work he loiters until the initial impetus has passed. His usual duties loom before him as huge, impossible tasks because he lacks the will to overcome the inner resistance. Sometimes a patient may become bedridden. Before the mental retardation becomes extreme, the individual may dwell upon and often attempt suicide. The majority of patients say they are "no good" and desire to die, and as they pass into and come out of the deeper depression the possible fulfillment of suicidal desires is most to be feared. As already stated, the emotional attitude is that of a more or less uniform depression, and the patient sees only the dark side of life. The past and future alike are full of misfortune. All aims in life have lost their charm. The patient feels himself unsuited to his environment, he has lost his religious faith and lives on day by day in gloomy submission to his ordained fate. Often patients are ill humored, shy, are pettish or anxious, and are frequently irritable and sullen. Compulsive ideas are not uncommon, and they feel compelled against their inclination to ponder over unpleasant scenes. They often possess insight into the nature of their condition but fail to correct their faulty emotional tone or the morbid trend of judgment. Often they sit help-

less, unable to begin work, and may even permit themselves to be fed; in some cases they may refuse to take food. Thus we find the chief symptoms of the disorder are mental and physical slowness and retardation, absence of spontaneous activity, a dearth of ideas, and a depressed emotional state.

As an explanatory preface to the discussion of the causes that may have played a rôle in the depressive episodes of Lincoln, we may briefly outline some of the more recent hypotheses of periodic or retarded depression. One of the more acceptable formulations is that recently put forward by Hoch, who has studied a long series in the light of the *Freudian* psychology covering the operations of the unconscious motives.

For some time antedating *Freud's* work it was known that in hypnotic states it was possible for one to experimentally create motives for actions and the latter could be carried out without the motive itself entering consciousness. For instance, a person duly hypnotized might be told while in that state that on the day following at a certain hour he would leave his office, return home and go to bed. The hypnotic seance would then be closed, and the following day the suggestion would be unconsciously obeyed. It, however, remained for *Freud* to reveal to us a new world of such unconscious motives of which we had previously been comparatively unaware. He insisted that the motives of infancy and childhood did not disappear from the mental life of the adult but underwent further development. From the very nature of their further development the original form of their existence ceased to exist as a reality to the normal adult consciousness. *Freud* found on analysis one of the great unconscious motives of the strivings of earliest life was a tendency for a strong attachment of the child to the parent, and particularly of a great love for the parent of the opposite sex. One recognizes at once the possible rôle such a love attachment might play in the development of the adult love-instinct. But adult love contains sensual elements which are not present in the child, and can, therefore, play no part in that tender feeling toward the parent. As puberty approaches, however, these sensual elements appear. It has been shown that the great task of puberty is to dissolve the bonds of the home tie and to transfer a part of the affections shown previously for the parent to new objects in the service of the instinct of propagation. This puberty-process, for some as yet unknown reason, is not possible to every individual, and the assumption is made that in such instances the trend of the sensual impulse then

flows in the direction of the tender feeling formerly felt for the parent. But the conscious personality strongly opposes this process, hence this sexually intensified part of the attachment for the parent remains repressed and unconscious. One may say, therefore, that in the course of adult development certain normal steps remain undeveloped, or are arrested. Hence this defect of undeveloped instinctive desires—which later are the very core of the personality—results in a defective adaptation especially in the sexual sphere, and, as has been carefully pointed out, when one states there is a sexual cause in every neurosis it does not necessarily imply a sexual cause in the adult sense, but in the sense that the cause lies in the imperfect development of the instinct. It has been shown that the unconscious has different depths, as it were, and that the infantile motives just mentioned are undoubtedly among the deepest repressed strivings. But in order to understand these infantile motives aright one needs to free himself from the ordinary adult logical way of thinking and meet the situation on the infantile level. Not a few persons, and even physicians, knowing that *Freud* has spoken of sexual causes and the child's longing for the parent, have simply combined or translated this into terms of adult sexuality. This is probably wrong, because adult sexuality has many qualities added at puberty which have no such formulation in the infantile life. Often the ideas of desire, expressed in the depressive phychosis in particular, are much more vague. They not infrequently express a mere desire of possession of some sort. This is well shown in the severest forms of melancholia wherein the longing is often expressed as a wish to die and be with the mother, or the wish for removal of the other parent as shown in the delusive statement that the father is dead. For instance, a man may become neurotic when he becomes engaged as Lincoln did. After marriage he may be unable to meet the marriage relations and then he may develop a psychosis of an intense type in which the ideas expressed are essentially that his marriage is annulled, his father is dead, and that he himself is following the mother into her grave and is united with her in her coffin. In other words, it may be inferred in such a case that the man was unable to adapt himself to his married life and therefore regressed or returned to a union with the mother. It can readily be seen that this psychotic setting is not sexual in the adult sense, though it is an evidence of imperfect adaptation of the sexual life.

There still remains another important point, namely, the thoroughly illogical nature of the above example. On logical grounds it

is absurd to wish—and we regard the delusions as expressions of unconscious wishes—that the father should die, when all that is desired is to be united with the mother in death. But the psychosis does not think logically. The wish for the father's death or removal exists, because to the child he is the rival in the affections of the mother. We must not forget that the ideas expressed in psychoses are often, so far as known, direct emanations of unconscious desires which cannot be understood by the observer or the patient when standards of logical thinking are applied to them. And, when we try to cast them into logical or adult forms, we are doing something which is, strictly speaking, not possible, and the formulation is apt to become onesided and artificial. To recognize this is important. The vagueness of these trends is not due to our imperfect knowledge of them so much as to their very nature, and we are not improving matters if we attempt to make them clearer than they really are.

It has been said that the infantile motives, upon which *Freud* lays so much stress, have been revealed by a method which is questionable, owing to the great latitude given in it to interpretation. But in studying the psychoses we find exactly the same motives as those which *Freud* has inferred, and here very often no complicated interpretation is needed, since the unconscious desires are expressed directly in the ideas of the patient. This is what should make the central claims of psychoanalysis so convincing to the psychiatrist. *Freudian* psychology, however, can be understood only when the dynamic importance of the deepest infantile motives is fully grasped, and this is a side on which even much of the psychoanalytic literature does not lay adequate stress.

In the foregoing brief outline, we have the principal teachings of *Freud,* elaborated and applied by Hoch to the mechanisms of the depressive episodes of the benign psychoses. It must be held in mind that in the milder forms of retarded depressions, those without hallucinations, delusions or disorientation, the expressions of sadness and dejection rarely go so far as to completely illustrate the hallucinatory or delirious form of the hypothesis. Thus it was in the life of Lincoln, where but the vaguer outlines of these ideas were in evidence.

We shall now undertake to sketch hastily the main facts of Lincoln's life, and note what bearing the above hypothesis has in the interpretation of the depressive episodes of this great man.

So far as we have knowledge, Lincoln's early childhood was in

no way dissimilar to that of any number of other children whose parents were pioneers in what was then a desolate wilderness. Little is known of his likes and dislikes or his manner of behavior and conduct aside from the fact that he was a well-intentioned, obedient and affectionate child.

In 1817, when the family made their way from Kentucky to Spencer County, Indiana, it was decided that they remain in this locality instead of pushing further westward. A shack was built, one side of which was left entirely open as there was no chimney, and the fire was built half in the home and half outside. During this bleak winter Abe and his sister enjoyed the rough pioneer life, but to the ill-clad, delicate mother it meant nothing but great deprivation and hard work. She coughed a good deal and seemed over-tired and sad, but no one seemed to realize that she was seriously ill. One day, while lying on her bed she motioned to her son to come near, and reaching out one hand to the eight-year-old boy she pointed to the little sister and whispered, "Be good to her, Abe." Then she closed her tired eyes, and several hours elapsed before the children knew she was dead.

Next day Lincoln's father made a rude coffin, and the mother was laid to rest at the top of a little hill. Abe protected the grave from the wild animals by piling rocks upon it, and the two children went down the hill clinging to each other in their grief. The boy grieved that his mother had been laid away without funeral rites, and several months later he took a wandering preacher to the little mound, already covered with the snows of winter, and had him deliver a funeral sermon over her grave.[3] It is said that he suffered the mother's loss more than any other member of the family, and that this was the dreariest winter of his life. But before another year had passed Mr. Lincoln brought from Kentucky a new wife, who was to change the lot of the little family decidedly for the better. One might think in the natural order of events the introduction of a foster mother into the home so soon after his own mother's death would have made the boy contract a dislike, or a certain amount of distrust toward her position in the household. Instead, however, a steadily increased companionship developed between the two. The warmth of this friendship was made the deeper in that the stepmother gave Abe her support in enabling him to carry out his desires for a more elaborate education than the backwoods ordinarily afforded. Indeed, she even urged this in spite of the fact

[3] Tarbell, Life of Abraham Lincoln, 1900, Vol. I, p. 27.

that the father desired him to engage in the more immediate issues of the home and upbuilding of the family income. It was probably at her instigation that he was permitted the few books which he borrowed or bought from his meagre savings. In view of the fact that the father himself had a fairly good education and was apparently disinclined to further his son's ambition in this direction, one can easily comprehend that not a little dislike was engendered in Abe's mind toward his father for thus curtailing his chances of gaining the education to which he aspired. Even antedating this rationalization for an innate lack of harmony between the son and father, there was probably also operative a more basic concept, which is common to all children. In such pioneering communities, the immediate necessity of expending effort toward overcoming the material disadvantages gave little opportunity for an expression of conjugal affection as seen in a more conventionalized society. With the intensive attachment that sons often feel toward the mother, it is natural in many instances for them to possess a keen desire to give the mother in a childish way the affection that the father seemingly neglects. However this may be, one is gradually made aware that Abraham Lincoln grew up much attached to the memory of his mother, and was companionable and kindly disposed toward his stepmother, but that there was a very loose bond of sympathy and attachment toward the father. For years Lincoln supported his father, who died at the age of seventy-three. For the sake of contrast, let us see the optimistic manner in which Lincoln met the death of his father, which took place in 1851. On receiving news of his father's illness, Lincoln felt "unable" for various reasons to go to his sickbed, but in writing to his step-brother said, "Say to him, that if we could meet now it is doubtful whether it would not be more painful than pleasant; but that if it be his lot to go now he will soon have a joyous meeting with loved ones gone before, and where the rest of us, through the help of God, hope ere long to join them."[4]

To return again to an earlier period: While Abe was quiet and reserved in manner and had in many instances evinced a crude shyness as ordinarily seen in rustic youths of his time, he was nevertheless very tender and devoted to his friends and associates. That he was naturally open and generous in all that concerned his relationships was well shown by innumerable instances, and in his protection of the weak against the strong. One also finds that Lincoln

[4] Francis R. Browne, Everyday Life of Lincoln, p. 113.

showed practically no dependence upon his father in the selection of an occupation in life; in fact he took a diametrically opposite course in his approach to the world than that which his father did. Instead of spending his time in studies of inventions and speculative applications of mechanical principles for improving the machinery of the farm, etc., he desired an open and freer contact with young men of his own age. The intensity of the attachment to the mother-imago or ideal was shown in greater part by the fact that he was very little concerned with the sentimentalities of courtship such as other young men were engaged in, and when in the company of young people he was largely the boon companion of the men and rather reserved and cold toward the opposite sex. Instead of having a series of girl friendships and being the squire gallant, there is but one instance of a really sentimental attachment up to the age of twenty-five years, when he made the acquaintance of Anne Rutledge, who was the daughter of one of the proprietors of the settlement at New Salem. It will be remembered this young lady was openly known to be engaged to a man who called himself "John McNeill," who had gone East apparently for the purpose of bringing his parents back with him to New Salem; this duty performed, he was then to marry Anne. In view of this knowledge it seemed to have been relatively easy for Lincoln to form an attachment for Anne under the guise of her being already promised to another,—easier than if she had been entirely free and to be considered in the marriageable class. After a year had elapsed and McNeill failed to return and carry out his part of the contract, Lincoln succeeded in persuading Anne to consider her engagement to the recalcitrant lover as broken, and in the spring of 1835 she consented to become Lincoln's wife. A happy spring and summer followed, but during this time Anne fell ill, and her condition gradually became hopeless. On August 25, 1835, Lincoln was summoned, and after an anguished parting, she died.[5]

This calamity shook the very foundations of Lincoln's deep and sensitive nature. He was profoundly depressed, could not eat or sleep, did little work, and appeared shaken to the depths. One evening not long after Anne's death he entered the little public house in the settlement during a severe storm. In the bitterness of his loneliness and grief he buried his face in his hands and with a cry of almost unbearable anguish and despair exclaimed, "The thought of the snow and rain on her grave fills me with indescribable grief." To the lonely little spot Lincoln frequently went to weep over her

[5] Tarbell, Life of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. I, p. 120.

grave, and to his friends he seemed to be in the shadow of madness.

In the course of several months, however, Lincoln recovered in greater part from the depression which followed this period, but now there began, apparently without reason, regular periods of slight depressions which were unaccountable, and, as he himself termed them, "unreasonable." We know little of the specific settings of the depressions from which he suffered prior to his engagement to Mary Todd at the age of thirty-one. It would seem as though his attachment was rather casual and very much helped on to an engagement by Miss Todd herself. She was pert, bright and vivacious, and showed a desire to dominate her companions; in contrary moods she was petulant—a trait which has been known in many instances to turn to other less pleasing channels in later life. It is interesting to note that when an actual cementing of the engagement into a marriage bond was to be carried into effect Lincoln became anxious and apprehensive, and showed an unusual amount of perturbation and dejection of spirit. The time fixed for the wedding was the first day of January, 1841. Careful preparations were made at the Edwards mansion; the rooms were decorated, the supper prepared, and the guests invited.[6] The latter assembled on the evening in question, and the bride, bedecked in veil and silken gown, nervously toyed with the flowers in her hair and waited in an adjoining room. Nothing was lacking but the groom. An hour passed; the guests, as well as the bride, were becoming restless. Another hour passed, and it became apparent that the principal in this little drama had purposely failed to appear. The bride, in grief, disappeared to her room; the wedding supper was left untouched; the guests quietly and wonderingly withdrew. What the feelings of a lady as sensitive, passionate and proud as Miss Todd were, we can only imagine. By daybreak, after persistent search, Lincoln's friends found him. Restless, gloomy, miserable, he seemed an object of pity. His friends, Speed among the number, fearing a tragic termination, watched him closely day and night. Every instrument that could be used for self-destruction was removed from his reach. Mrs. Edwards did not hesitate to regard him as insane, and her sister, Miss Todd, shared in that view.

Here one is at once struck with the fact that the depression immediately succeeding this episode was one in which there was not only an incomplete adjustment to Miss Todd as a bride, but, as we

[6] William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Abraham Lincoln, the True Story of a Great Life.

shall see later, Lincoln seemed unable to adapt himself to the full requirements of marriage itself. Hence the profound depression which came on at this time. This despondency was as deep as that ordinarily seen in the depressive psychosis; there was retardation in thought and action, periods of extreme silence, listlessness, indifference, loss of appetite, insomnia, alternating with moods of anxious restlessness. He had gloomy forebodings and thoughts of suicide. This depressive period extended over nearly ten months following his failure to appear on the date first set for his marriage. During this time Lincoln was absent from his regular duties in the State assembly, which he had up to this time carefully and painstakingly attended; he was finally taken by his good friend Speed to Kentucky to regain his health. The question has often been asked whether Lincoln actually had a short period of detention in a sanitarium. We have information, however, that he was kept under the careful watch of different members of the family in Kentucky and was permitted to occupy himself as he pleased upon the ranch. As the months wore on he gradually assumed a more natural attitude, and began to take a more normal interest in his surroundings. After several months he returned to take up his regular duties. He had not, however, entirely recovered his mental health even after this sojourn, and he still had feelings of inadequacy and doubt with periods of depression. The incomplete recovery was shown in his letter to Speed, who had himself married in the meantime after undergoing somewhat similar difficulties in meeting the marriage situation. It will be remembered that after Speed's marriage, when he was settled and contented upon a well-stocked plantation, Lincoln wrote as follows under date of October 5, 1842: "I want to ask you a close question—Are you now, in *feeling* as well as judgment, glad you are married as you are? From anybody but me this would be an impudent question, not to be tolerated; but I know you will pardon it in me. Please answer it quickly, as I am impatient to know." We also gain some idea of the triumph and final compromise in Lincoln's closing words in another letter to Speed, which strikes the keynote of the main difficulty of all whose love ideals are too high for fulfillment, when the mother-love still stands in the way or is not replaced by the independent adult love of marriage: "It is the peculiar misfortune of both you and me to dream dreams of Elysium far exceeding all that anything earthly can realize."[7] From this and other data it is shown that Lincoln was striving man-

[7] Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, A History, Vol. I, p. 197.

fully to meet life situations as they were, and he gradually acquired a feeling as though he were given new power to readjust and to meet the marriage relation, for soon after we learn of the renewal of the engagement, and its final consummation. From that time, however, there succeeded attacks of periodic depression. Added to this, while the family life seemed to have been of a happy character, there was some mitigation of the uxoriousness of the marriage tie with the advent of children. When the marriage relations are not simple, natural and satisfying, the mother may transfer a part of her unrequited affection to the children, especially to those of the opposite sex, and the father similarly to the daughters. It seems likely that some of the love not requited in the marriage state was expressed by Lincoln in the fine comradeship that sprung up between him and his third son, William. This affectionate relationship continued to grow daily in importance, so that it was obvious to all that William was Lincoln's great favorite. One also sees that when periods of depression were in evidence, the mere presence of this son was a great comfort and satisfaction to the father and helped him to bear many of his onerous burdens.

Now we must digress a little to note the obverse of the mother attachment. Some time previous to his marriage, Lincoln had written an extensive thesis against the Church, particularly its authority and dominating position in the world and affairs of men. We gain a lurking suspicion that the clear and incisive mind of Lincoln was intent upon lessening the power of *authority* and *dominance* which the Church had through the ages exercised over its devotees. One also gains a strong conviction more than once founded upon fact, as we have seen, that the deepest motive in such a rejection of authority as the portent of this thesis seemed to have implied, was the denial of the heavenly as well as the earthly father's dominance. It is obvious all through Lincoln's early life, his speeches, his addresses and his ordinary conversation that he often quoted the Bible as many another great statesman has done. These citations are the accrements of thinking and belief common to all people; Lincoln apparently comprehended this throughout his whole career, and in dealing with the masses he acted upon this facile fact in his use of it as a universal language understood by all people. Further, it is obvious if one read his speeches and addresses with these facts in mind, that until very much later in life he used these Biblical citations in a purely rhetorical sense, to express emotions that were most aptly handled in such phraseology, rather than as a

fundamental belief springing from his own soul. In point of fact Mrs. Lincoln once said that he had no religious faith in the usual acceptance of the word, but that religion to him was a sort of poetry in his nature.[8]

We shall soon see the application of the foregoing in our thesis. The next great emotional crisis in Lincoln's life that we have to consider is the unforeseen death in 1862 of his favorite son, William. At the boy's sickbed he walked the floor, saying sadly, "This is the hardest trial of my life."[9] One would have expected from the nature of Lincoln's personality that the essence of his love brought forward from his attachments to his mother and Anne Rutledge would have been so concentrated in his attachment for this son that a depression of considerable intensity would have occurred; this, indeed, did happen. Instead of a long period of depression, however, in which there was inability to work, insomnia, thoughts of suicide, etc., as had been present at the death of Anne and at his failure to make the marriage bond with Mary Todd, the depression was very short. The whole period of sorrow, embraced in an incipient phase of sadness, was entirely removed in the short period of three days. It is interesting to observe by what mechanism this condition seemed to have been curtailed. Lincoln shut himself in his room alone, and saw little of his wife or other son, and in the depths of his despair he turned to religion. That which he had known purely as a form of speech or argumentative rhetoric, and embracing more deeply much which we have seen in an expression of antagonism to the concept of authority as proceeding from God, etc., was now transformed. At this religious experience following his son's death he made a full reconciliation with God and accepted him as his personal God, and from that time on it was seen that a calm and peace entered into his attitude toward life that he had never before known.[10] Coupled with this was an abiding sense that he was protected and guided by the Heavenly Father in all things that portended his attitude in official as well as private affairs. In the depth of this religious conversion we see more than is ordinarily supposed to exist in such an episode. We probably have evidence here that he reconciled himself to the earthly as well as to the Heavenly father, and that at last antagonism toward the earthly father had been removed and he was at peace with the conflict

[8] Francis R. Browne, Everyday Life of Lincoln, p. 478.

[9] Francis R. Browne, Ibid., p. 351.

[10] Tarbell, Life of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 92.

within his own soul. One must remember, however, that the infantile situation in such states passes in two directions—an intensive attachment to the mother, and a dislike for the father. The latter, as we have seen, was greatly if not entirely removed; but not so the former; we shall see how it is still symbolized during the remainder of his life. For instance, the calmness and peace that reigned in his mind are shown in the last days of his life, when he seemed to be roused to a new sense of the beauty of peace and rest, taking pleasure in quiet spots, and reading over and over lines of poetry which expressed repose. The tranquility of death seemed to especially appeal. Mrs. Lincoln once related to a friend that while driving one April day with her husband along the banks of the James they passed a country graveyard shaded by trees, and where the early spring flowers were opening on nearly every grave. It was so quiet and attractive that they stopped the carriage and walked through it. Mr. Lincoln seemed thoughtful and impressed. He said, "Mary, you are younger than I. You will survive me. When I am gone, lay my remains in some quiet place like this."

It would carry us too far afield to explain in detail that the symbolic meanings of these and other musings of Lincoln have much of the idealized longings for the mother-image.[11] The enormous task for many to separate themselves from the home, and the mother in particular, is beautifully and poetically portrayed by Jung:[12]

. . . at the sunrise of life man looses himself painfully from the mother, from the ties of home, to fight the way to his destiny, his direst enemy not before him, but within him, that deadly yearning backward to the abyss of self, to drown in his own wellspring, for engulfing within the mother. His life is an unending struggle with this death, a violent and fleeting escape from ever-imminent night. This death is no outer foe, but his own and inner longing for the silence and deep quiet of not-to-be, a dreamless sleep upon the waters of creation and passing away. Even in his highest strivings towards harmony and balance, for philosophic depth and artistic skill, he yet seeks death, for stillness, for satiety and peace. Should he, like Peirithoos, rest too long in this place of morning calm, stupor lays hold of him, and the poison of the serpent has crippled him forever. If he shall live, then he must fight, and give up his yearning for the past, that he may rise to his true height. And when he has reached his noonday, then he must again sacrifice the love

[11] Lincoln often said, "All that I ever have been, and all that I hope to be, I owe to my mother."

[12] Wells' review of Jung's Symbolism in the Unconscious, Psychiatric Bulletin, 1916.

of his own greatness, since for him there can be no tarrying. So does the sun spend his fullest strength, hastening onward to the fruits of autumn, which are the seeds of immortality; in children, in work, in renown, to a new order of things—whose suns in their courses once more shall rise and wane.

According to Lincoln's most intimate friends, he was totally unlike other people, and indeed was looked upon as a "mystery." They considered him a sad and gloomy man, who did not know what happiness was. "Terrible" was the word which his friends used to describe him in his darkest moods.[13] His musical tastes were simple, and he loved plaintive songs and ballads. He liked best of all "Twenty Years Ago," a song depicting a man who revisits the playground of his youth and the graveyard where his boyhood friends are buried.

All through 1863 and 1864 Lincoln's thin face had day by day grown more haggard; his eye, always sad when he was in deep thought, had a look of unutterable grief. Through all these months Lincoln was, in fact, consumed by sorrow. "I think I shall never be glad again," he said to a friend.[14] But as one by one the weights lifted, a change came over him. He was in fact transfigured, and that indescribable sadness which seemed to be a part of his very being, suddenly changed for an equally indescribable expression of serene joy, as if he were conscious that the great purpose of his life had been achieved.

So we find that Lincoln at last accepted a religious outlet, as a means for unconsciously solving or sublimating a large part of his regressive relations with life which had heretofore taken the form of intensive and prolonged depressions. There can be little doubt had Lincoln lived, in spite of the fact that the reconstruction period would have been an enormous tax on his great powers in carrying it through to its final and just conclusion, he would not have suffered from deep depressions—at least not to the extent that had been characteristic of him for the years prior to his final reconciliation to a personal religious life. That the intense longing for the mother-ideal was unchanged and was still the dominant note in Lincoln's soul is shown in the persistence of his life-long characteristic dream. Its beautiful and classic significance should be at once obvious in its death symbolism. In this dream, he said he seemed to be in a singular and indescribable vessel, always the same, mov-

[13] Francis R. Browne, Everyday Life of Lincoln, p. 113.

[14] Francis R. Browne, Ibid., p. 545.

ing with great rapidity towards a dark and indefinite shore. Lincoln had implicit faith that events would shape themselves favorably when he had this dream, which preceded nearly every important event of the War. Lincoln said that victory did not always follow his dream, but that the event and results were important. On the night previous to his assassination Lincoln said, "I had this strange dream again last night. It must relate to Sherman; my thoughts are in that direction, and I know of no other very important event which is likely just now to occur."[15]

To his wife Lincoln said, "We have had a hard time of it, but the war is over, and with God's blessing we may hope for four years of peace and happiness." Lincoln looked forward to going back to practicing law, and such were his thoughts on the last day of his life. His little son "Tad" was overcome with grief at his father's death, and asked if his father had gone to Heaven, "for," he added, "he was never happy after he came here; this was not a good place for him."

In the main, it seems that the benignant attitude Lincoln took toward the weak and downtrodden, shown, for instance, in his making the abolition of slavery the slogan for continuing the struggle of the Civil War, was prompted not a little by the more than filial devotion he must have felt for his mother. His willing, often eager desire to pardon infractors of military discipline, unwise, perhaps, for the rigorous exactions of military demands, was born to no little degree from his signal inability to meet some phases of his own personal conflicts (*e.g.,* his wedding day). At times so keen was his desire to pardon that he accepted almost any apparently sincere excuse. In point of fact when this was met with remonstrance, he later came to give little or no explanation for such leniency. He often said that no mother was to be made to suffer any more than the necessity of war required, and not at all through any personal act of his own if he could help it.

From this study, then, it would seem that no small part of Lincoln's depressions was due to certain deep, unconscious fixations or soul attachment to the mother hindering the normal emotional life which in turn made it impossible in early life for him to assume the usual attitude of religious feeling and thought. His early contention that there was no authenticity in the teachings of the Church and his denial of the authority of the Heavenly Father made it impossible for him to accept Christ as an intercessor; hence no religious

[15] Francis R. Browne, Everyday Life of Lincoln, p. 583.

consolation could be obtained. There being only a conviction of sin without real repentance, such an attitude could gain for its possessor no release in religious devotion. As Lamon[16] rightly contended, such a character might force himself to be merry or find relief in a jest; gratified ambition might elevate his feelings and give him ease for a time, but solid, abiding comfort could come only through a conscious sense of an indwelling of the spirit, which was finally shown in the true religious conversion Lincoln experienced after his son's death. Although it may be but casually mentioned that the intense unconscious fixation upon his mother made Lincoln's character chivalrous, upright and tender toward all human suffering, yet it stood in the way or prevented the love and acceptance of Christ, the true intermediary to God. Many religiously inclined neurotics and psychotics realize dimly the truth of such a soul defect from which they suffer and pass their days in dolorous lamentation of their inability to fully believe. One might venutre to say that in such a dilemma the parental image being so fixed neither the love of Christ, nor an adult love so necessary for a satisfactory marriage, is possible. One may say that in consequence not only is the adult marriage unstable and often unsatisfactory owing to the continual seeking for the perfect love, or "Elysium" as Lincoln himself expressed it, but the love-pursuit is often continued outside the main object of attachment. Biographers have shown that Lincoln was even greatly enamoured of his wife's cousin and several other women. In many less honorable characters the unconscious quest for lovers of one sort or another is the common rule and the bane of their existence. One cannot doubt that the nagging attitude of Mrs. Lincoln was in no small degree an unconscious protest to the incompleteness of her love endowment in the marriage tie. If a religious sublimation was the final happy compromise in Lincoln's life, what fardels of heartache and personal conflicts might he not have saved himself in accepting an early and true religious conversion. Such a protection has often been urged by advocates of the Christian faith, a possession often devoutly wished for by both the patient and physician when once a profound melancholia has befallen the victim.

We note that State rights—the right of a State to secede from the Union—was the first concern of all statesmen of the period before the war and even in the first year of the conflict. Lincoln, even two years after the war had begun, answered Greeley: "My

[16] Ward H. Lamon, Life of Abraham Lincoln, p. 504.

paramount object is to save the Union and not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it. If I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that."[17] Even at a much earlier period he had held that "the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils." Again, at a much earlier period when discussing the thirteenth amendment of the Constitution, Lincoln held that there was no equality of the negro with the whites either in color or in many other respects but in the inalienable rights as human beings they were certainly entitled to everything the white race enjoyed. However, Lincoln gradually discarded the States rights issue for the abolition of slavery. Lincoln was extraordinarily quick to feel the importance of transferring the motive for a long-continued struggle from a more or less academic issue to a keen personal one—one which would fire the popular imagination with glowing emotional warmth and zeal comparable to the slogan in the recent great world war in which the dominant note was to "Make the world free for democracy." Although the grinding life of toil which the downtrodden slave endured must have keenly touched Lincoln's sensitive soul, yet he seems to have taken a less personal interest in the slaves than did many another abolitionist, such as Garrison and the slave runners of the North. No doubt Lincoln was much more concerned with the general principle of freeing all sorts of oppressed peoples, and the slave incidentally. There seems to have been but one instance of Lincoln's close personal contact with the degrading treatment of the negro slaves and that was when he was in the early twenties, at New Orleans. After witnessing some of the debasing spectacles in the slave market, he said, "Boys, let's get away from this. If ever I get a chance to hit that thing (slavery), I'll hit it hard." In his later speeches and utterances he was singularly silent upon the personal brutalities practiced upon the slaves. While no doubt Lincoln sympathized with the sentimental propagandists of abolishing bodily suffering, he devoted himself to expounding the more general cause of human liberty and freedom, which, of course, included the former incidentally. His was a general plan to redress all human wrongs even to extending mercy to those who had been in violent antagonism to the abolition of slavery itself—a difficult and often misunderstood position and which the strict conservatives about Lincoln frequently

[17] Tarbell, Life of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 118.

misconstrued. To many men of that memorable period who had been engaged in "force without stint," it seemed that the change which Lincoln's character underwent near the end of the war, after his favorite son's death and subsequent religious conversion, portended weakness rather than strength. It is a matter of history that the war party looked with grave foreboding upon Lincoln's general attitude of a feasible reconstruction. It seemed to many that Lincoln was about to undo the great purpose of the national struggle in allowing the South to go free from final punishment. Even in the last cabinet meeting before his assassination Lincoln showed his intent to deal leniently and fairly with the erring South when he said, "I shall bear no hate or vindictiveness toward the South. The worst of them we must frighten out of the country, let down the bars and scare them off."

On the basis of the interesting results revealed in this application of the newer dynamic psychology to an analysis of the personality of Lincoln, one may say that intensive psychological studies should be made of great national characters to throw as much light as possible upon the part which they may have played as well as to determine what influence their personal conflicts and motives may have had upon shaping the national events which they directed. Only by this broad cooperation of psychology and history are we likely to arrive at a comprehensive historical interpretation of the dominating personalities of any period.[18]

[18] I want to extend my thanks to Prof. J. Harvey Robinson and Prof. Harry E. Barnes for their critical suggestions in preparing the manuscript.

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